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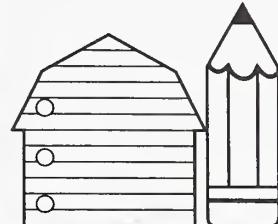
Ag in the Classroom

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Notes

United States
Department of
Agriculture



A bi-monthly newsletter for the Agriculture in the Classroom Program. Sponsored by the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture to help students understand the important role of agriculture in the United States economy. For information, contact the AITC Director, Room 4307, South Bldg., USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250-0991. 202/720-7925.

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14th National Conference a Success

The largest National Conference on Agriculture in the Classroom in history was held in Monterey, California. The more than 400 participants represented the diversity that makes the Ag in the Classroom effort nationwide such a success. They came from 46 states. They were teachers, agribusiness leaders, college professors, and volunteers. But all shared a concern for promoting agricultural literacy in our nation's next generation.

A day-long series of preconference workshops were well attended. Topics included Let's Go Surfing: Connecting to the Internet, Happiness is High Yield Agriculture, Desktop Publishing, and Planting Seeds in the Curriculum.

The conference program also reflected the wide range of topics that are part of today's AITC programs. Speakers ranged from California's Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman to Howard Helmer, World Record Holder in the Guiness Book of World Records who led participants in a Make-Your-Own-Omelette Breakfast. Later, Cathy Baranek and Marilyn Relles helped the group bake bread. That was topped off with homemade butter, thanks to Lynn Bly, state contact in New Hampshire and the Granite State Dairy Promotion Board.

Participants met two authors: Chris Petersen, author of *Harvest Year*, and David Masumoto, whose *Epitaph for a Peach* is reviewed in this edition of *Notes*. They also attended a variety of workshops. Topics included Agricultural Stereotypes in Children's Books, Bringing Seasons Into Your Classroom, Cotton's Journey From Seed to

Continued on page 7



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Scenes from the 14th
Annual Conference

From the Director:

As I am sure many of you heard, the 1996 National Ag in the Classroom Conference in Monterey, California, was a tremendous success! The attendance of 400 broke the largest attendance record of 250 at the Kansas City Conference and was 100 more than we expected. Many, many thanks to our speakers, the California Foundation for Ag in the Classroom staff members, and the planning committee for their hard work to conduct such an excellent educational event. The site and dates of the 1997 conference will be announced in our next newsletter.

This issue of "Notes" provides us with an opportunity to introduce you to a wonderful new author. David Masumoto spoke at the 1996 National Ag in the Classroom Conference and had us alternately laughing and choked with emotion. His love of the land and descriptions

of farm life speak to the heart. Mike Jarman's middle school lesson plans will help educators utilize this wonderful book in classrooms.

Our newest Ag on the Internet address is the Foreign Ag Service (FAS). FAS is the newest USDA partner to work with Ag in the Classroom. You will be hearing more about international agriculture in future issues.

This issue also highlights another outstanding teacher. If you would like to share your efforts, please call or write our office. We will need photographs if it is to be included in *Notes*.

We look forward to hearing from you. Please enjoy this issue of our newsletter.

Elizabeth A. Wolanyk

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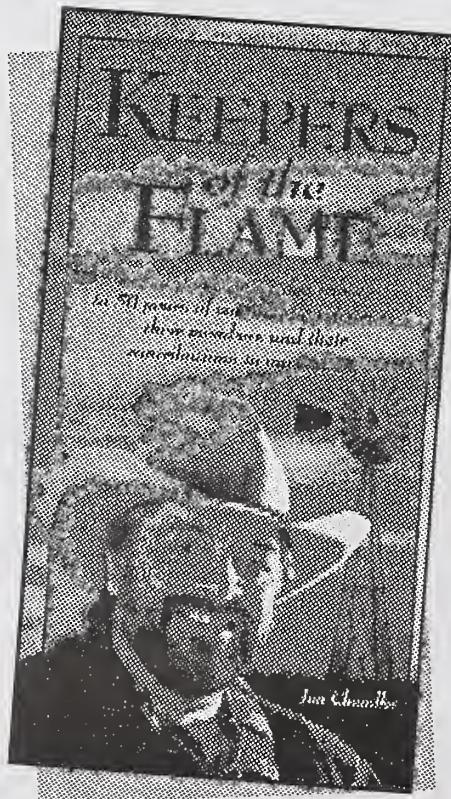
Videos Highlight Conservation and Carrots

Whether the topic is carrots or conservation, two new agricultural videos will be sure to interest students of all ages.

Keepers of the Flame

This seven-minute music video is a heartfelt tribute to our nation's conservation farmers and ranchers. Jon Chandler, a Denver-based musician, wrote and performed *Keepers of the Flame*, which was released in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the National Association of Conservation Districts.

Jon Chandler wrote and performed Keepers of the Flame



Filmed at a working farm near Perry, Iowa, the video is an emotional patchwork of scenes from the past and the present. There's also a nod of the head to those who will carry on the important work of soil and water conservation in the future.

Keepers of the Flame is available for \$7 plus shipping and handling, which varies by location. Order by phone at 1-800-825-5547 or by writing the National Association of Conservation Districts, 408 E. Main, P.O. Box 855, League City, TX 77574-0855.

Continued on page 6

Spotlight

Wyoming Students Learn that Ranchers Are Environmentalists

"Ranchers are truly the world's first and best environmentalists," says Margy Steidley, a teacher at Lander South Elementary School in Lander, Wyoming. She and her third grade students have become local experts on ranching because of a year-long project designed to teach students about one of Wyoming's most important industries.

The Nature Conservancy owns the Red Canyon Ranch, located about 25 miles from Lander. Steidley and her students visited three times—once in the fall, once in the winter, and once in the spring. "Making return visits to the same place allowed students to sharpen their powers of observation," Steidley says.

Each visit was designed with a slightly different focus. One time, students learned about pasturing. They were amazed to discover that Bob Budd, who manages the ranch, uses graphs to plan his pasturing throughout the year. "Students were excited because they were learning graphing in school and could see the relationship between what they had learned and this real-world activity," Steidley explains.

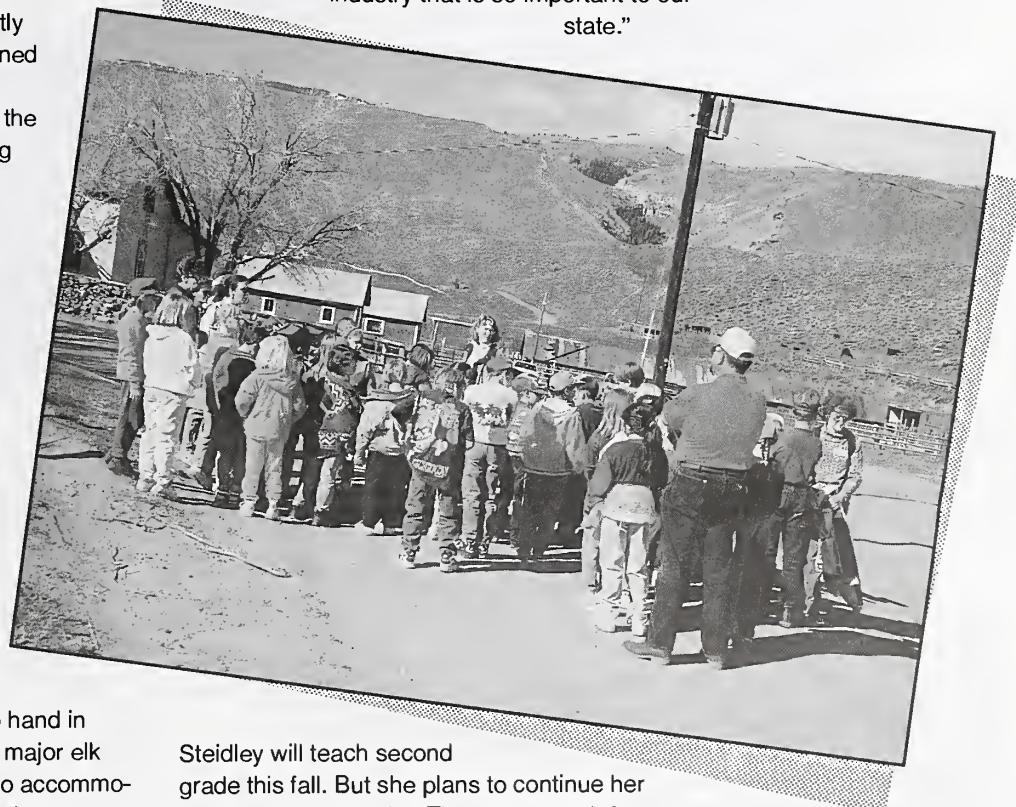
On other visits, students looked at different kinds of habitat necessary for both the ranch animals and the wildlife animals. "The emphasis was both agricultural and environmental," Steidley says. That combination, she believes, is essential for successful ranchers. "They are good stewards of the land. They have to be."

Red Canyon Ranch is a working ranch that is designed to demonstrate that ranching and environmentalism go hand in hand. For example, the ranch lies on a major elk migratory route. Grazing is scheduled to accommodate the migration route of the elk, Steidley's students learned.

In addition to making three trips to Red Canyon Ranch, the class also visited a more traditional ranch. "It was good for my students to see the similarities and differences in the two operations."

Steidley was able to devote so much time to the study of ranching because the district's science curriculum emphasizes agriculture. That's no accident—she was a prime mover in changing the curriculum to reflect the agricultural focus.

"Several years ago, I was reading one of the *Little House* books to my students," she explains. It talked about a threshing machine. My students had no idea what that was," she says. She began to see what else her students knew—and didn't know. "One thing sort of led to another, and by the time our science curriculum came up for review, I knew I wanted to help our children learn about the industry that is so important to our state."



Steidley will teach second grade this fall. But she plans to continue her agricultural emphasis. "There's so much for students to learn," she says. "The younger they start, the better."

Ranchers are environmentalists, these third grade students learn.

Food For America Revised

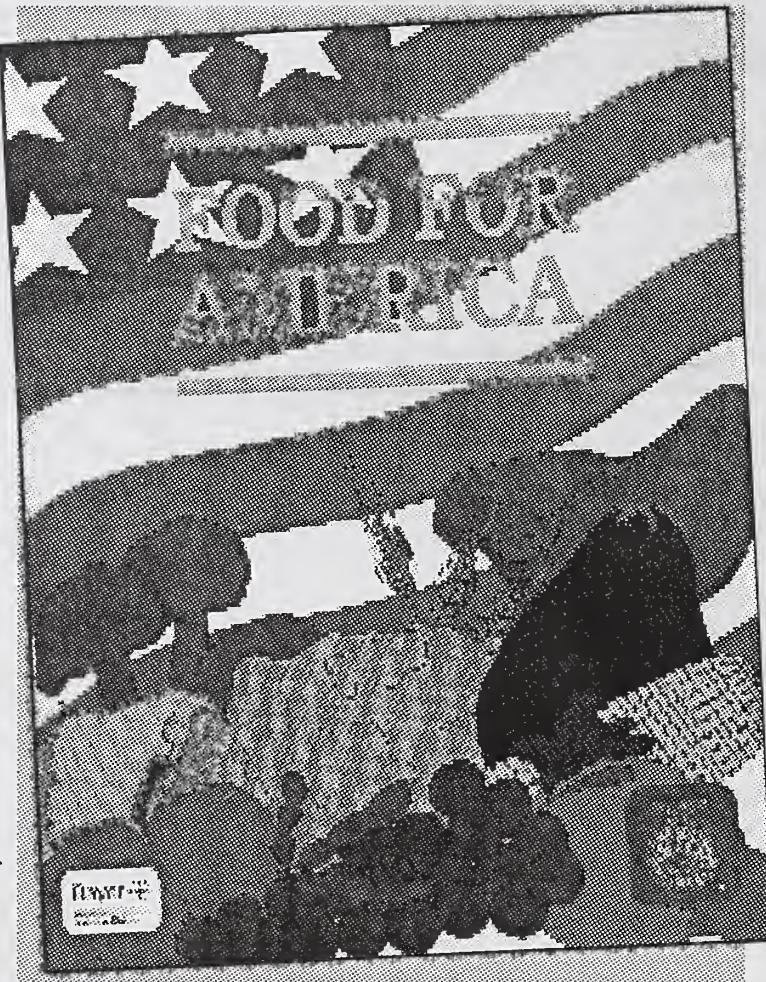
Ask elementary students about agriculture and they'll probably conjure up images of something like "Old MacDonald's Farm." Chances are they don't think about the processing, services, regulation, marketing, and many other facets of the industry of agriculture.

Food For America, a series of lessons and activities for students in grades 1-6, makes students more aware of the world of agriculture and how it affects their daily lives. Produced by the National FFA Organization, *Food For America* includes lessons and activities on production agriculture, processing, distribution, nutrition, food safety, trade and marketing, environment, careers, and agricultural history.

The lessons are divided into primary (for grades 1-3) and upper elementary (for grades 4-6). Each of the 27 lessons begins with a concise statement of the areas and items covered and the grade level suggested. Learner outcomes and background information follow. Each lesson is accompanied by one or more activity sheets.

The flexible resource package is designed to integrate into existing curriculum. For example, in the lesson "Agriculture by the Numbers," students practice their graphing skills as they chart how the farm population has changed from 1790 until now and how the numbers of people fed by each farmer has changed during the same time.

Environmentalism is an important emphasis in *Food For America*. Lessons like "Farmers Love the Land" and "Soil Conservation" help students



understand more about how farmers are stewards of the land and water.

Students also learn about modern agriculture. In "How Food Moves From Farm to You," they learn that the dinner they eat tonight may have traveled by boat, boxcar, truck, and airplane before reaching their table. In "Careers in Agriculture," students investigate careers that may interest them.

The *Food For America* teaching kit includes a short video that can be used to introduce any of the lessons in the teaching package. The complete package is \$24.95. Order from the National FFA Organization, 703-780-5600.



Epitaph for a Peach

"Farmers need to tell our stories more often," believes author David Masumoto. "When we tell stories, we capture the emotions and the value of our work—and our relationship to the land."

Masumoto, a third generation farmer, has told his story in *Epitaph for a Peach: Four Seasons on My Family Farm*. This lyrical book tells the story of Masumoto's efforts to market his Sun Crest peaches, which he calls "one of the last remaining, truly juicy peaches." This once popular variety has been replaced in supermarkets by newer peaches with longer shelf lives—but less flavor.

"I consider myself a farmer first and a writer second," Masumoto says. "But it's a close second." Readers discover that while Masumoto is talking about growing peaches, he is also writing about nature, agriculture, the Asian American experience, and a way of life. Brief excerpts of *Epitaph for a Peach* illustrate why the book has received glowing reviews in publications ranging from *New York Times Book Review* to *Eating Well Magazine*.

On manure piles: "A common practice was to buy manure in the good years in order to build up the soil. I could identify which neighbor had a good year by the direction of the wind and the smell of profits being returned to the earth."

On farm dust: "All good farmers become connoisseurs of dirt and dust. My dust is a fine powder. The soil is a sandy loam that would be a chef's delight. Add water to the earth and create a rich roux, thick but pliable. Stir and the air will be filled with a rich aroma of turned earth. . . . I lick my lips often when working in my dust."



Epitaph for a Peach is a lyrical look that centers on the author's efforts to market Sun Crest peaches.

Masumoto is already at work on his next book. "It will deal with family again. Since we're a century farm family, the new book involves a history of our family and farming."

Epitaph for a Peach was published by Harper San Francisco. It is available in bookstores for \$20.

Teacher Mike Jarman has developed a lesson plan for *Epitaph for a Peach*. Copies are available on a cost recovery basis. For more information contact Mike Jarman, 5825 E. Del Monte, Fresno, CA 93727.

Continued from page 2

The Carrot Highway

The first orange carrot wasn't discovered until the 1600's. Before that, these versatile vegetables were purple, green, yellow, and even tan.

Interesting facts like these are part of *The Carrot Highway*, a whimsical story that takes viewers around the world. Produced by carrot farmer Ron Wyss, *The Carrot Highway* informs young viewers while entertaining them.

A combination of humor and facts makes this 40-minute video appeal to a wide age range. It would be especially appropriate for upper elementary and middle grades, but would also appeal to younger children.

The video shows viewers about the people who bring this crop to the table—from the scientists who develop carrot seed to the truck drivers who transport it. It teaches the basics of genetics: carrots today are sweeter and better tasting than those available in the 1950s, thanks to the breakthrough research of Dr. Henry Munger.

The video also shows how carrots are grown for seed and how the seed is processed and distributed. *The Carrot Highway* ends with spectacular footage of carrots being processed: peeled, polished, sorted, bagged, cut, and frozen.

The Carrot Highway is available for \$14.95 plus \$2.95 shipping and handling. (Ohio residents add 6 percent sales tax.) Contact Whisper Products, 3686 County Road 60, Ada, OH 45810; or call 1-800-631-6236.



*A favorite vegetable is the focus of a 40-minute video titled *The Carrot Highway**



INTERNET

Ag on the Internet: Foreign Agricultural Service

Whether you're looking for information about export programs, want to learn more about U.S. trade policy, or are conducting foreign market research, FAS Online probably has what you're looking for. The Internet service, provided by the Foreign Agricultural Service, also includes general information about FAS programs, resources, and services.

The address for the FAS Home Page is:
<http://www.usda.gov/fas>
Online, the address is:
<http://www.ffas.usda.gov/ffas>

Continued from page 1

You, Adopt-a-Classroom and Pen Pal Programs, Program Evaluation, Nuts and Bolts of Producing a Reader, and Funding Classroom Projects.

The students who are the primary focus of AITC programs were present at the conclusion of the conference when teacher Carla Wright and her students shared what

they'd learned about agriculture. They also sang agricultural songs, including "Dirt Made My Lunch."

The conference also saw the creation of a consortium of state Ag in the Classroom programs. This consortium will enable AITC programs to have a voice at the national level on issues that relate to agricultural literacy.



Ag in the Classroom---State Contacts

The individuals listed here are key reference persons in each state. If you have any questions, want to make reports, or need more information about your state's Ag in the Classroom program, contact the following:

Alabama
Ms. Jane Alice Lee
2101 Bell Road
Montgomery, AL 36117
334-240-7124

Mississippi
Ms. Brenda Summerlin
Dept of Ag & Industries
PO Box 3336
Montgomery, AL 36193
334-240-7124

Alaska
Mr. Ted Berry
Alaska AITC
P.O. Box 62
Willow, AK 99688-0062
907-495-1018

Mike Carlson
Box 953
Delta Junction, AK 99737
907-895-4819 (H)

Arizona
Ms. Deborah Flowers
3401 East Elwood Street
Phoenix, AZ 85040-1625
602-470-0088

Arkansas
Dr. Larry R. Dale
ASU Center for Economic
Education
P.O. Box 2890
State Univ., AR 72467-2890
501-972-3810

California
Mr. Mark Linder
CA Foundation for AITC
1601 Exposition Blvd FB 16
Sacramento, CA 95815
916-924-4380

Colorado
Ms. Helen Davis
Colorado Dept of Agriculture
700 Kipling St. #4000
Lakewood, CO 80215-5894
303-239-4114

Ms. Bette Blinde
Colorado Foundation for Agriculture
28276 WCR 15
Windsor, CO 80550
970-686-7806

Connecticut
Bernadet Kayan
510 Pidgeon Hill Rd.
Windsor, CT 06095
203-683-1922

Dr. Alfred Mannebach
University of Connecticut
249 Glenbrook Rd
Storrs, CT 06269-2093
203-486-0246

Delaware
Ms. Anne T. Fitzgerald
Delaware AITC
Delaware Dept. of Ag.
2320 S. DuPont Highway
Dover, DE 19901
302-739-4811 Ext. 279

Florida
Ms. Doty Wenzel
545 E. Tennessee
Room 206 Black Building
Tallahassee, FL 32308
904-487-4973

Georgia
Ms. Donna Reynolds
Georgia Farm Bureau
PO Box 7068
Macon, GA 31298
912-474-8411

Hawaii
Mr. Michael Barros
2530 10th Avenue
Bldg. A, Room 23
Honolulu, HI 96816
808-733-9125

Idaho
Mr. Rick Waitley, Director
Waitley Associates
1741 Gibson Way
Meridian, ID 83642
208-688-0988

Illinois
Ms. Stacy Shane
Illinois Farm Bureau
Field Services Division
1701 Towanda Ave
Bloomington, IL 61702-2901
309-557-3334

Indiana
Ms. Pam Bright
Office of Commission
150 West Market, Suite 414
Indianapolis, IN 46024
317-232-8769

Mr. Harry L. Pearson
Indiana Farm Bureau
P.O. Box 1290
Indianapolis, IN 46206
317-692-7851

Colorado
Ms. Barbara Lykins
Iowa Farm Bureau Federation
5400 University Avenue
West Des Moines, IA 50266-5997
515-225-5425

Kansas
Sandra Kramer
124 Blumont Hall
Kansas State University
Manhattan, KS 66506
913-532-7946

Kentucky
Ms. Faye Lowe
Kentucky Farm Bureau
9201 Bunson Pkwy
Louisville, KY 40250-0700
502-495-5000

Ms. Rayetta Boone
Department of Agriculture
500 Mero St., 7th Floor
Frankfort, KY 40602
502-564-4696

Louisiana
Ms. Barbara Langley
LA Farm Bureau Federation
PO Box 95004
Baton Rouge, LA 70895-9004
504-922-6200

Florida
Ms. Doty Wenzel
545 E. Tennessee
Room 206 Black Building
Tallahassee, FL 32308
904-487-4973

Maine
Mr. Buzz Gamble
Department of Educ.
Sta. #23
Augusta, ME 04222-0433
207-287-5899

Maryland
Steven A. Connally
Maryland Agricultural Education
Foundation, Inc.
2101 East Fort Avenue - Suite 124
Baltimore, MD 21230
410-752-0671
410-783-0857 FAX

Massachusetts
Deborah C. Hogan
c/o P.O. Box 1171
Lakeville, MA 02347
508-336-4426

Michigan
Dr. Eddie Moore
410 Agriculture Hall
Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI 48824
517-355-6580

Michigan
Ms. Julie Chamberlain
Michigan Farm Bureau
7373 W Saginaw Hwy
Lansing, MI 48909
517-323-7000

Minnesota
Mr. Alan Withers
MN Department of Agriculture
90 W Plaza Blvd
St Paul, MN 55107
612-296-6688

Mississippi
Ms. Teri Bontrager
MS Farm Bureau
P.O. Box 1972
Jackson, MS 39215-1972
601-977-4824

Missouri
Ms. Diane Olson
Missouri Farm Bureau
PO Box 658
Jefferson City, MO 65102
314-893-1400

Montana
Margie Thompson
Agriculture in Montana Schools
Rural Route
Wolf Creek, MT 59648
406-562-3562

Nebraska
Ms. Ellen Hellerich
NE Farm Bureau Federation
PO Box 80299
Lincoln, NE 68501
402-421-4400 ext 2002

Nevada
Ben Damonte
1300 Marietta Way
Sparks, NV 89431
702-853-6464

Dorothy Hammond
Hot Springs Ranch
Star Rt.
Golconda, NV 89414
702-529-0440
Ben Damonte Co-contact

New Hampshire
Ms. Lynne Blye
Dept. of Agriculture
Caller Box 2042
Concord, NH 03302
603-271-3696

New Jersey
Ms. Joni Elliot
NJ Dept. of Agriculture
CN330
Trenton, NJ 08625
609-292-8897 or 633-7463

New Mexico
Smoky Blanton
NM Farm & Livestock Bureau
421 N Water
Las Cruces, NM 88001
505-526-5521

New York
Andrew Fagan
New York AITC
408 Kennedy Hall
Cornell University
Ithaca, NY 14853-5901
607-255-8122

North Carolina
Ms. Janice Shepard
NC Farm Bureau
PO Box 27766
Raleigh, NC 27611
919-782-1705

North Dakota
Ms. Sarah Nordby
ND Dept. of Agriculture
HC 1, Box 9
Amidon, ND 58620
701-224-4757

Ohio
Ms. Judy Roush
Ohio Ag Awareness Council
PO Box 479
Columbus, OH 43216-0479
614-249-2429

Oklahoma
Dr. Charles Cox
205 Poultry Science
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, OK 74078
405-744-5390
FAX 405-744-6522

Missouri
Ms. Jo Theimer
Oklahoma Dept. of Agriculture
2800 No. Lincoln Blvd.
Oklahoma City, OK 73105-4298
405-521-3864
FAX 405-521-4912

Oregon
Mary Steward
Agri-Business Council
1200 NW Front Ave., Suite 290
Portland, OR 97209-2800
503-221-8756

Pennsylvania
Ms. Pat Sueck
534 Kennedy Road
Arrville, PA 17302
717-862-3486

Wisconsin
Mr. Bob Leege
Wisconsin Farm Bureau
7010 Mineral Point Rd
Madison, WI 53705
608-836-5575

Rhode Island
Ms. Carol Stamp
1 Stamp Place
South County Trail
Exeter, RI 02822
401-783-7704

South Carolina
Robbie Myers
SC Ag in the Classroom
4913 College Lake Drive
Florence, SC 29506
803-665-1361(H)
803-796-6700 (W)

South Dakota
Ms. Melanie Schumacher
SD Ag in the Classroom
P.O. Box 577
Pierre, SD 57501
605-945-2306

Tennessee
Charles Curtis
Tennessee Farm Bureau
P.O. Box 313
Columbia, TN 38402-0313
615-388-7872

Texas
Mr. Tad Duncan
Texas Farm Bureau
PO Box 2689
Waco, TX 76702-2689
817-772-3C30

Utah
Ms. Debra Spielman
UT State University
PO Box 4582
Logan, UT 84322-2315
801-797-1657

Vermont
Ms. Megan Camp
Shelburne Farms
Shelburne, VT 05482
802-985-8686

Virginia
Gus Howe
Vermont Farm Bureau
RR 2 Box 123
Richmond, VT 05477
802-434-5646

Washington
Shan Schnebly
P.O. Box 786
Ellensburg, WA 98926
509-962-4134

West Virginia
Mr. Doug Hasslen
P.O. Box 4256
Olympia, WA 98504-2560
206-902-1940

West Virginia
Mr. William Aiken
WV Farm Bureau
1 Red Rock Road
Buckhannon, WV 26201
304-472-2089

Wyoming
Ms. Lori Gross
2219 Carey Ave.
Cheyenne, WY 82002
307-322-5727

Ms. Elaine Moore
Wyoming Ag in the Classroom
2407 Highland Court
Douglas, WY 82633
307-358-6232

Canada
Jean Middleton
Ontario Agri-Food Education
110 Tamarac Trail
Aurora, Ontario L4G 5T1
905-841-7594

Guam
Resident Instruction Coordinator
College of Ag & Life Sciences
University of Guam
Mangilao, Guam 96923
671-735-2009
Fax 671-734-6842

Micronesia
Dr. Rubin Dayit
USDA/SCS
Caribbean Area State Office
GPO Box 4959
San Juan, PR 00936
809-498-5206

Virgin Islands
Mr. Eric Bough
Dept. of Economic Development
& Agriculture
St. Croix, VI 00850
809-778-0991

Mr. Otis Hicks

Mr. Eric Bough

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Room 4307, South Bldg.

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